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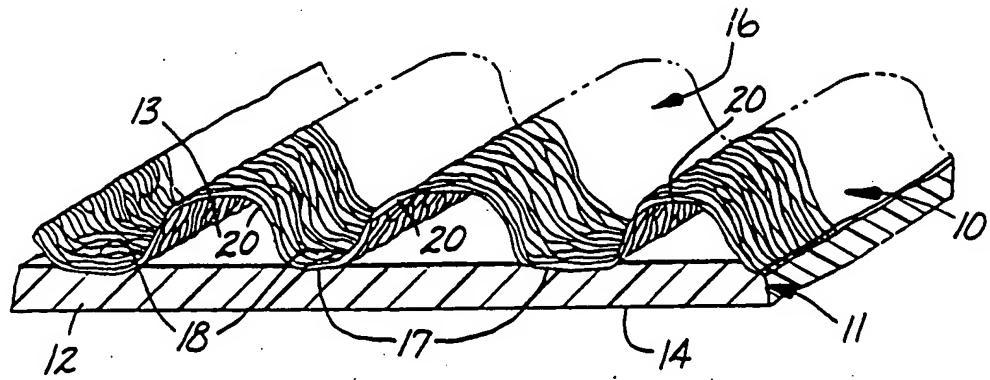
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(54) Title: SHEET OF LOOP MATERIAL, AND GARMENTS HAVING SUCH LOOP MATERIAL INCORPORATED THEREIN



(57) Abstract

A sheet of loop material (10) adapted to be cut into pieces to form loop portions for fasteners of the type comprising releasably engageable hook and loop portions (20), or to be incorporated into items such as disposable garments or diapers or into sheets of abrasives. The sheet of loop material includes a sheet of longitudinally oriented fibres (16) having anchor portions and arcuate portions projecting in one direction away from the anchor portions (17), and a layer of thermoplastic backing material extruded onto the anchor portions to bond to the anchor portions and form at least a portion of a backing for the loop material. The thermoplastic backing material (12) can also bond the sheet of fibers to a sheet of backing material.

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- 1 -

SHEET OF LOOP MATERIAL, AND GARMENTS
HAVING SUCH LOOP MATERIAL INCORPORATED THEREIN

5 Technical Field

The present invention relates to sheets of loop materials adapted to be cut into pieces to form the loop portions for fasteners of the type including releasably engageable hook and loop portions, to methods for making 10 such sheets of loop materials, and to garments such as disposable diapers including pieces of such loop material.

Background of the Invention

Many sheets of loop materials are known that are 15 adapted to be cut into pieces to form the loop portions for fasteners of the type comprising releasably engageable hook and loop portions. Such sheets of loop materials typically comprise a backing and a multiplicity of loops formed from longitudinally oriented polymeric fibers anchored in the 20 backing and projecting from a front surface of the backing so that they may be releasably engaged with the hooks on the hook portion of such a fastener, and can be made by many methods including conventional weaving, or knitting techniques. Sheets of loop materials in which the loops 25 are stitched into the backing are described in U.S. Patents No.s 4,609,581 and 4,770,917. While the loop fastener portions made from many such sheets of loop materials work well with many different hook fastener portions, many of the processes by which the sheets of loop material are made 30 are more expensive than may be desired, particularly when the loop fastener portions are intended for a limited amount of use, such as to attach a disposable diaper to a person.

35 Disclosure of Invention

The present invention provides a sheet of loop material adapted to be cut into pieces to form the loop portions for fasteners of the type comprising releasably engageable hook and loop portions and a method and

- 2 -

equipment for making that sheet of loop material, which sheet of loop material, method and equipment provide effective loop fastener portions for such fasteners that are very inexpensive to manufacture either in a form 5 intended for a limited amount of use, such as to releasably attach a disposable diaper or other disposable garment to a person, or in a form intended to be used a larger number of times.

According to the present invention there is 10 provided a sheet of loop material adapted to be cut into pieces to form loop portions for fasteners, which sheet of loop material includes a backing comprising a thermoplastic backing layer with generally uniform morphology, and a sheet of longitudinally oriented fibers having generally 15 non-deformed anchor portions bonded or fused in the thermoplastic backing layer at spaced bonding locations, and arcuate portions projecting from a front surface of the backing between the bonding locations.

When the sheet of loop material is used to form 20 loop portions of fasteners intended for limited use (i.e., for uses in which the fastener will ordinarily be opened and closed 10 times or less), preferably the arcuate portions of the sheet of fibers have a height from the backing of less than about 0.64 centimeters (0.250 inch) 25 and preferably less than about 0.38 centimeters (0.15 inch); the width of the bonding locations should be between about 0.005 and 0.075 inch; and the width of the arcuate portions of the sheet of fibers should be between about 0.06 and 0.35 inch. Also, the fibers in the arcuate 30 portions should project to about the same height above the front surface of the backing, which height is at least one third, and preferably one half to one and one half the distance between the bonding locations, the individual fibers should be less than 25 denier in size, and the 35 fibers collectively should have a basis weight in the range of 5 to 300 grams per square meter (and preferably in the range of 15 to 100 grams per square meter) measured along the front surface of the backing to provide sufficient open area between the fibers along the arcuate portions (i.e.,

- 3 -

between about 10 to 70 percent open area) to afford ready engagement of the fibers along the arcuate portions by the hook portion of the fastener.

When the sheet of loop material is used to form 5 loop portions of fasteners intended for more than limited use (i.e., for uses in which the fastener is adapted to be opened and closed more than 10 times, and in some many more than 10 times, such as 50,000 times), the arcuate portions of the sheet of fibers can have a height similar to that 10 indicated above, and the width of the bonding locations can also be about the same, however, the sheet of fibers preferably has a higher basis weight in the range of 75 to 150 grams per square meter measured along the front surface of the backing so that more loops are available for 15 engagement by the hook portion of the fastener, and the individual fibers could be up to 32 denier in size. Such increased basis weight can be achieved by causing the method according to the present invention to place the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers closer together 20 along the backing so that the width of the arcuate portions of the sheet of fibers measured along the front surface of the backing is far less even though the lengths of the individual fibers in each arcuate portion are about the same.

25 The sheet of loop material according to the present invention is made by forming a sheet of longitudinally oriented polymeric fibers so that the sheet of fibers has arcuate portions projecting in the same direction from spaced anchor portions of the sheet of fibers, and then forming at least a portion of a backing 30 around the spaced anchor portions of the sheet of fibers by extruding thermoplastic material onto the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers so that the arcuate portions of the sheet of fibers project from a front surface of the newly 35 formed backing.

Such forming of the sheet of fibers is preferably done by providing first and second generally cylindrical corrugating members each including a plurality of uniformly spaced ridges defining its periphery, mounting the

- 4 -

corrugating members in axially parallel relationship with portions of the ridges of the corrugating members in mesh with each other, rotating at least one of the corrugating members, feeding the sheet of fibers between the meshed portions of the ridges of the rotating corrugating members to generally conform the sheet of fibers to the periphery of the first corrugating member, thereby forming the arcuate portions of the sheet of fibers in spaces between the ridges of the first corrugating member and the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers along outer surfaces of the ridges of the first corrugating member, and retaining the formed sheet of fibers along the periphery of the first corrugating member after it has moved past the meshing portions of the ridges. At least a portion of the backing (or the entire backing) is then formed around the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers by extruding the molten thermoplastic material onto the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers while those anchor portions are on the end surfaces of the ridges on the first corrugating member.

Such forming of the backing around the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers provides the advantage compared to sonic welding or other forms of heat fusion of the fibers to a pre-formed backing that the fibers in the anchor portions are generally non-deformed (even though the outer fibers in the anchor portions may be slightly flattened) and thus the individual fibers retain most of their initial strength adjacent the bonding location, while with the proper combination of materials the surface of the fibers can be fused to the backing material to firmly anchor the fibers in the backing; and the resultant thermoplastic layer in which the fibers are bonded has generally uniform morphology throughout (even though the morphology of the backing may be slightly altered around the anchor portions of the sheet of fiber due to their effect as a heat sink), rather than having different morphological structures in large portions extending through the backing through which sonic energy or other sources of heat were applied to bond the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers to the backing compared to adjacent portions of the backing, which

differences in morphological structures typically weakens the backing. The thermoplastic material extruded onto the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers can be of the type that solidifies as it cools, or can be of the type called reactive hot melts that partially solidify as they cool and then cross link as a result of exposure to an external element such as atmospheric moisture or ultraviolet radiation. Also, the thermoplastic material can be extruded onto both the anchor portions of the fibers and onto an adjacent surface of a sheet of backing material intended to be incorporated into the backing (e.g., a layer of polymeric film or a layer of adhesive) or onto both the anchor portions of the fibers and onto an adjacent surface of a sheet of support material intended to shape or retain the shape of the backing as it cures, which sheet of support material can later be stripped away.

Preferably the thermoplastic material is extruded onto the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers just prior to a nip between the first corrugating member and a cooling roller. The cooling roller then either forms the surface of the backing opposite the sheet of fibers when the backing is formed only of the extruded thermoplastic material, or guides along its surface any sheet of backing material or support material intended to be incorporated into or support the backing so that the cooling roller brings that sheet of backing or support material into intimate contact with the side of the molten thermoplastic material opposite the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers in the nip between the cooling roller and the first corrugating roller.

When the cooling roller is rotated at a slower peripheral speed (e.g., one quarter or one half the peripheral speed) than the first corrugating roller, the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers along the ridges of the first corrugating roller will be pushed closer together in the molten layer of extruded thermoplastic material at the nip between the first corrugating roller and the cooling roller, resulting in a sheet of loop material that has more loop portions per square inch and a greater basis

weight for the sheet of fibers than when the peripheral speeds of the first corrugating roller and the cooling roller are the same. This technique for increasing loop portions and basis weight of the sheet of fibers on the 5 sheet of loop material is useful both to make sheets of loop materials having different numbers of loop portions per centimeter of backing length using the same equipment, and to make sheets of loop materials with more loop 10 portions per centimeter of backing length than could be formed between ridges machined on the corrugating members because of physical limitations involved in machining such ridges close together.

The ridges of the corrugating members can be elongate and generally parallel so that the bonding 15 locations are also elongate and generally parallel and are continuous in one direction across the front surface of the backing so that continuous rows of the arcuate portions extend across the backing of the sheet of loop material; or alternately the ridges can be elongate, generally parallel, 20 and in a regular pattern of discontinuous lengths so that the parallel bonding locations are also in a regular pattern of discontinuous lengths to form a regular pattern of discontinuous rows of the arcuate portions of the sheet of fibers along the front surface of the backing. Also it 25 is contemplated that the ridges of the first corrugating member can form interlocking closed patterns (e.g., in the shape of circles, diamonds, octagons, letters, numbers, etc.) to form corresponding patterns for the arcuate portions of the fibers along the front surface of the backing, in which case the second corrugating member will 30 be formed with post like ridges to press the sheet of fibers into the centers of the closed patterns.

Elongate ridges on the corrugating members can be oriented parallel to axes of the corrugating members, or at 35 right angles to the axes of the corrugating members with the corrugating members extending around the corrugating members, or at many other angles with respect to the axis of the corrugating members so that the rows of arcuate portions of the sheet of fibers, whether continuous or

- 7 -

discontinuous, can be oriented along or transverse to the sheet of fibers fed between the corrugating member or at many angles therebetween.

The individual longitudinally oriented fibers may 5 be of many polymeric materials such as polypropylene, polyethylene, polyester, nylon or polyamide, or combinations of such materials such as a core of polyester and a sheath of polypropylene which provides relatively 10 high strength due to its core material and is easily bonded due to its sheath material. Fibers of one material or fibers of different materials or material combinations may be used in the same sheet of fibers.

The sheet of fibers may be fed between the meshed ridges of the corrugating members in the form of a non 15 woven or random woven sheet in which the fibers may or may not be bonded together. In such a sheet the fibers may be disposed in various directions with respect to the direction the sheet of fibers is fed between the corrugating members so that in the resultant sheet of loop 20 material the fibers are disposed in various directions with respect to the spaced bonding locations. In such a sheet of fibers to be fed between corrugating members with spaced parallel ridges, preferably a majority of the fibers (e.g., over 70 or 90 percent) project in one direction along the 25 sheet of fibers and the sheet of fibers is fed between the corrugating members with that direction at about a right angles to the ridges on the corrugating members so that in the resultant sheet of loop material a majority of the fibers project at about right angles to the parallel 30 bonding locations.

Alternatively, the fibers may be provided in the form of yarns in the range of 50 to 300 denier, the yarns distributed to provide a sheet of generally uniformly distributed fibers by passing them through a comb, and the 35 sheet of fibers fed between corrugating members having elongate parallel ridges oriented in the range of 0 to 45 degrees with respect to their axes in a direction perpendicular to their axes, which results in a sheet of loop material in which the fibers all extend in directions

- 8 -

at about the same angle with respect to the parallel bonding locations.

Brief Description of Drawing

5 The present invention will be further described with reference to the accompanying drawing wherein like reference numerals refer to like parts in the several views, and wherein:

10 Figure 1 is a perspective view of a first embodiment of a sheet of loop material according to the present invention;

Figures 2 and 3 are photographs at magnifications of 15 and 50 respectively of the sheet of loop material of Figure 1;

15 Figure 4 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of a sheet of loop material according to the present invention;

20 Figure 5 is a schematic view illustrating a first embodiment of a method and equipment according to the present invention for making the sheet of loop material of Figure 1;

25 Figure 6 is a schematic view illustrating a second embodiment of a method and equipment according to the present invention for making the sheets of loop material of Figure 4 or Figure 7;

Figure 7 is a perspective view of a third embodiment of a sheet of loop material according to the present invention;

30 Figure 8 is a schematic view illustrating a third embodiment of a method and equipment according to the present invention for making the sheets of loop material of Figure 4;

Figure 9 is a fragmentary view taken approximately along lines 9-9 of Figure 8; and

35 Figure 10 is a side view of a corrugating member that could be substituted for corrugating members illustrated in Figures 5, 6, and 8.

SUBSTITUTE SHEET

Detailed Description

Figures 1, 2 and 3 illustrate a first embodiment of a sheet of loop material according to the present invention, generally designated by the reference numeral 10, which sheet of loop material 10 is adapted to be cut into pieces to form the loop portions for fasteners of the type intended for limited use and having releasably engageable hook and loop portions. Generally the sheet of loop material 10 has a backing 11 comprising a thermoplastic backing layer 12 (e.g., of polypropylene) in the range of about 0.00125 to 0.025 centimeters (0.0005 to 0.010 inch) thick having generally uniform morphology, front and rear major surfaces 13 and 14, and a multiplicity of longitudinally oriented fibers in a specially formed sheet of fibers 16 having anchor generally non-deformed anchor portions 17 bonded by being embedded in the backing layer 12 at spaced elongate generally parallel bonding locations 18 that are continuous in one direction along the front surface 13 with arcuate portions 20 of the sheet of fibers 16 projecting from the front surface 13 of the backing layer 12 between the bonding locations 18 in continuous rows also extending transversely across the sheet of loop material 10. The arcuate portions 20 of the sheet of fibers 16 have a generally uniform height from the backing layer 12 of less than about 0.64 centimeters (0.250 inch) and preferably less than about 0.381 centimeters (0.150 inch), the height of the formed sheet of fibers 16 is at least one third, and preferably one half to one and one half times the distance between the bonding locations 18, the individual fibers in the sheet of fibers 16 are less than 25 denier (preferably in the range of 1 to 10 denier) in size, and the sheet of fibers 16 without the backing 11 has a basis weight in the range of 5 to 300 grams per square meter (and preferably in the range of 15 to 100 grams per square meter) measured along the first surface 13 to provide sufficient open area between the fibers in the sheet of fibers 16 along the arcuate portions 20 (i.e., between about 10 and 90 percent open area) to

- 10 -

afford ready engagement of the individual fibers along the arcuate portions 20 by the hook portion of the fastener.

The fibers in the sheet of fibers 16 can be disposed in various directions with respect to the parallel bonding locations 18 and may or may not be bonded together at crossover points in the arcuate portions 20; can be disposed in various directions with respect to the parallel bonding locations 18 with the majority of the fibers in the sheet of fibers 16 (i.e., over 80 or 90 percent) extending 5 in directions at about a right angle to the bonding locations 18; or all of the individual fibers in the sheet of fibers 16 can extend in directions generally at right 10 angles to the spaced generally parallel bonding locations 18.

15 Figure 4 illustrates a second embodiment of a sheet of loop materials according to the present invention, generally designated by the reference numeral 10a, which sheet of loop material 10a has the same structure as the sheet of loop material 10 (the same reference numerals 20 being used with respect to the corresponding portions thereof) except that backing 11a of the sheet of loop material 10a includes a second sheet of backing materials 21, which second sheet of backing material 21 is adhered on the side 14 of the thermoplastic backing layer 12 opposite 25 the sheet of fibers 16. The second sheet of backing material 21 in the backing 11a of the sheet of loop material 10a is a polymeric film which can be printed on one of its surfaces to provide a sheet of loop material 10a on which the printing (which could be decorative, indicate 30 a trade name, or provide instructions) can be clearly seen through the sheet of fibers 16.

35 Figure 5 schematically illustrates a first embodiment of a method and equipment according to the present invention for forming the sheet of loop material 10. The method illustrated in Figure 5 generally comprises forming longitudinally oriented polymeric fibers into a sheet of fibers 16, forming the sheet of fibers 16 so that it has arcuate portions 20 projecting in the same direction from spaced generally parallel anchor portions 17 of the

sheet of fibers 16, and bonding the spaced generally parallel anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 in the backing layer 12 with the arcuate portions 20 of the fibers 16 projecting from the front surface 13 of the 5 backing 12. This method is performed by providing first and second heated corrugating members or rollers 26 and 27 each having an axis and including a plurality of circumferentially spaced generally axially extending ridges 28 around and defining its periphery, with the ridges 28 10 having outer surfaces and defining spaces between the ridges 28 adapted to receive portions of the ridges 28 of the other corrugating member 26 or 27 in meshing relationship with the sheet of fibers 16 between the meshed ridges 28 and to afford rolling engagement between the 15 ridges 28 and spaces of the corrugating members in the manner of gear teeth. The corrugating members 26 and 27 are mounted in axially parallel relationship with portions of the ridges 28 of the corrugating members 26 and 27 meshing generally in the manner of gear teeth; at least one 20 of the corrugating members 26 or 27 is rotated; and the sheet of fibers 16 is fed between the meshed portions of the ridges 28 of the corrugating members 26 and 27 to generally conform the sheet of fibers 16 to the periphery of the first corrugating member 26 and form the arcuate 25 portions 20 of the sheet of fibers 16 in the spaces between the ridges 28 of the first corrugating member 26 and the generally parallel anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 along the outer surfaces of the ridges 28 on the first corrugating member 26. The formed sheet of fibers 16 30 is retained along the periphery of the first corrugating member 26 after it has moved past the meshed portions of the ridges 28. The thermoplastic backing layer 12 is formed and bonded to the anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 on the end surfaces of the ridges 28 on the first 35 corrugating member 26 by extruding the thermoplastic backing layer 12 (e.g., polypropylene) in a molten state from a die 24 into a nip between the anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 on the periphery of the first corrugating member 26 and a cooling roll 25 after which the

- 12 -

sheet of loop material 10 is separated from the first corrugating member 26 and carried partially around the cooling roll 25 and through a nip between the cooling roller and a pinch roller 29 to complete cooling and 5 solidification of the thermoplastic backing layer 12.

The sheet of fibers 16 fed between the meshed portions of the ridges 28 of the corrugating members 26 and 27 can be in the form of yarns distributed so that the fibers in the sheet of fibers 16 fed between the meshed 10 ridges 28 of the corrugating members 26 and 27 are uniformly distributed across the width of the sheet of fibers 16 and all extend generally perpendicular to the axes of the corrugating members 26 and 27, or the fibers in the sheet of fibers 16 can be disposed in random 15 orientation as in a non woven web or sheet. Such a non woven sheet of randomly oriented fibers 16 with no internal bonding except for the friction between the fibers can be formed from loose fibers using a carding machine 30 as illustrated, which non woven sheet of randomly oriented 20 fibers 16 has enough integrity to be fed from the carding machine 30 into the nip between the corrugating members 26 and 27 (if needed, a conveyer (not shown) could be provided to help support and guide the non woven sheet of fibers 16 between the carding machine 30 and the corrugating members 25 26 and 27). When such a non woven sheet of randomly oriented fibers 16 is used, preferably the first corrugating member 26 has a rough finish (e.g., formed by sand blasting), the second corrugating member 27 has a smooth polished finish, and the first corrugating member 26 30 is heated to a temperature slightly above the temperature of the second corrugating member 26 so that the non woven sheet of fibers 16 will preferentially stay along the surface of the first corrugating member 26 and be carried to the nip between the first corrugating member and the 35 cooling roller 25 after passing through the nip between the corrugating members 26 and 27. Optionally, the backing 11 of the sheet of loop material 10 can be printed on its surface opposite the sheet of fibers 16 through the use of a printer 31, either in the production line as illustrated.

- 13 -

or as a separate operation. Alternatively, the printer 31 could be used to print on and thereby color or print a pattern on the sheet of fibers 16 either in the production line as illustrated, or as a separate operation.

5 Corrugating members 26 and 27 adapted to have such a sheet of fibers 16 fed into them can have their ridges 28 oriented generally in the range of 0 to 45 degrees with respect to their axes, but preferably have their ridges 28 oriented at 0 degrees with respect to (or 10 parallel to) their axes which simplifies making of the corrugating members 26 and 27.

Figure 6 schematically illustrates a second embodiment of a method and equipment according to the present invention for forming the sheets of loop materials 10a, which method is generally the same and uses much of the same equipment as is illustrated in Figure 5 (with similar portions of that equipment having the same reference numerals), except for the addition of means including a pinch roller 34 for feeding the sheet of 15 backing material 21 or 22 into the nip between the first corrugating roller 26 and the cooling roller 25 along the surface of the cooling roller 25 which results in the 20 extruded molten thermoplastic backing layer 12 from the die 24 being deposited between the formed sheet of fibers 16 along the periphery of the first corrugating member 26 and the sheet of backing material 21 along the surface of the cooling roll 25 so that the molten thermoplastic backing 25 layer 12 envelopes and adheres the anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 to the sheet of backing material 21 after which the sheet of loop material 10a is separated 30 from the first corrugating member 26 and carried partially around the cooling roll 25 with its backing 11a against the cooling roll 25 to complete cooling and solidification of its thermoplastic backing layer 12. The molten 35 thermoplastic backing layer 12 can be extruded into the nip, onto the anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers on the first corrugating member 26 prior to the nip, or onto the sheet of backing material 21 along the periphery of the cooling roller just prior to the nip as may work best for

any given application. The cooling roll 25 can be water cooled and have a chrome plated periphery which is particularly useful for forming the sheet of loop material 10a because of the high rate of heat transfer such a 5 cooling roll 25 affords from the molten thermoplastic backing layer 12, through the sheet of polymeric backing material 21 and into the cooling roll 25. Alternatively, the cooling roll 25 may have an outer rubber layer defining 10 its surface which may be preferred for forming the sheet of loop material 10a if the sheet of backing material 22 is of a material (e.g., paper) that tends to restrict such heat transfer into the cooling roll 25, whereupon the rubber layer provides an alternative advantage of deforming 15 adjacent its nip with the first corrugating roller 26 to provide intimate contact of the molten thermoplastic backing layer 12 with the anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 and the sheet of backing material 21.

The sheet of backing material 21 incorporated in the backing 11a could be a woven, knitted, random woven, 20 needle punched, nonwoven or other solid or porous layer of intertwined fibers, or could be a continuous polymeric film which allows the backing to be printed by conventional methods along one of its surfaces with graphics (such as advertising, instructions or locating marks) which will be 25 visible through the loop portions 20 of the sheet of fibers 16 due to their large percentage of open area. Such film used for the sheet of backing material 21 may be a single layer of a polymeric material such as polypropylene, polyester, or polyamide; or may have a plurality of layers 30 such as a central layer of a relatively high strength material such as polyester, a layer defining the first surface of a material more easily bonded to the layer of thermoplastic material 12 such as ethylene vinyl acetate or polyethylene, and a layer defining the outer surface of the 35 backing 11a adapted to adhere the backing 11a to a substrate such as polyethylene or a bonding layer of room-temperature non-tacky thermoplastic material adapted to adhere a fastener portion to a polyolefin layer (such as may be found on a disposable diaper) that can be bonded to

the polyolefin layer under heat and pressure that leaves the polyolefin layer substantially free of deformation and will hold the fastener portion to the polyolefin layer with greater force than that which is required to separate an 5 engaged fastener, which bonding layer of room-temperature non-tacky thermoplastic material is described in allowed U.S. Patent application No. 126,746 filed November 30, 1987, the content whereof is incorporated herein by reference. The sheet of backing material 21 could also be 10 a layer of pressure sensitive adhesive along a release liner disposed so that the release liner contacts the cooling roller 25, resulting in the layer of pressure sensitive adhesive being disposed along the rear surface of the layer of thermoplastic material 12 with the release 15 liner over the layer of pressure sensitive adhesive and removable so that the pressure sensitive adhesive could be used to adhere the sheet of loop material 10a to a substrate.

Preferably, the drives for the corrugating 20 members 26 and 27 and for the cooling roller 25 are separately controllable so that the cooling roller 25 can be rotated at a surface speed that is the same as or different than the surface speed of the first corrugating member 26. When the cooling roller 25 and the first 25 corrugating member 26 are rotated so that they have the same surface speed, the sheet of fibers 16 will have about the same shape along the backing 11 or 11a as it had along the periphery of the first corrugating member 26 as is illustrated in Figures 1 through 4. When the cooling 30 roller 25 and the first corrugating member 26 are rotated so that the cooling roller 25 has a surface speed that is slower than the surface speed of the first corrugating member 26, (e.g., one quarter or one half) the anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 will be moved closer 35 together in the molten thermoplastic backing layer 12 at the nip between the cooling roller 25 and the first corrugating member 26, resulting in greater density of the loop portions 20 along the backing 11 or 11a (illustrated in Figure 7 for the sheet of loop material 10a) than when

- 16 -

the cooling roller 25 and the first corrugating member 26 are rotated so that they have the same surface speed. This technique of increasing the amount of loop portions 20 or the loop population on the sheet of loop material 10 or 10a 5 is useful both to make sheets of loop materials 10 or 10a having different numbers of loop portions 20 per centimeter of backing length using the same equipment, and to make sheets of loop materials 10 or 10a with more loops portions 20 per centimeter of backing length than could be formed 10 between ridges 28 machined on the corrugating members 26 and 27 because of physical limitations in machining such ridges 28 close together.

Figures 8 and 9 schematically illustrate a third embodiment of the method and equipment according to the 15 present invention for forming the sheet of loop material 10a, which method is generally the same and uses much of the same equipment as is illustrated in Figure 6 (with similar portions of that equipment having the same reference numerals), except that the first and second 20 corrugating members 26 and 27 are replaced by first and second cylindrical heated corrugating members or rollers 44 and 45 each having an axis and including a plurality of generally annular, circumferentially extending, axially spaced parallel elongate ridges 46 around and defining its 25 periphery, with the ridges 46 having outer surfaces and defining spaces between the ridges 46 adapted to receive portions of the ridges 46 of the other corrugating member 44 or 45 in meshing relationship with the sheet of fibers 16 between the meshed portions of the ridges 46. The 30 corrugating members 44 and 45 are mounted in axially parallel relationship to mesh portions of the ridges 46 of the corrugating members 44 and 45; at least one of the corrugating members 44 or 45 is rotated; and the sheet of fibers 16 is fed between the meshed portions of the ridges 46 of the corrugating members 44 and 45 to generally 35 conform the sheet of fibers 16 to the periphery of the first corrugating member 44 and form the arcuate portions 20 of the sheet of fibers 16 in the spaces between the ridges 46 of the first corrugating member 44 and the

- 17 -

generally parallel anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 along the outer surfaces of the ridges 46. The formed sheet of fibers 16 is retained along the periphery of the first corrugating member 44 after separation of the 5 ridges 46; the extruded molten thermoplastic backing layer 12 from the die 24 is deposited between the formed sheet of fibers 16 along the periphery of the first corrugating member 44 and the sheet of backing material 21 along the surface of the cooling roll 25 so that the molten 10 thermoplastic backing layer 12 envelopes and adheres the anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 to the sheet of backing material 21, after which the sheet of loop material 10a is separated from the first corrugating member 26 and carried partially around the cooling roll 25 to 15 complete cooling and solidification of its thermoplastic backing layer 12.

The sheet of fibers 16 fed between the meshed ridges 46 of the corrugating members 44 and 45 can be in the form of a non woven web formed by adhering the fibers together, or another sheet formed of the fibers that has sufficient internal strength so that the sheet of fibers 16 will corrugate longitudinally to conform to the ridges 46 as it is pulled into the nip between the meshing ridges 46 of the corrugating members 44 and 45. Preferably a 20 majority of the fibers in such a non woven sheet of fibers 16 are oriented transversely of the direction the sheet of fibers 16 is fed between the corrugating members 44 and 45 so that a majority of the fibers in the resultant sheet of loop material 10a extend in directions at about right 25 angles to the parallel bonding locations 18. A sheet of loop material 10a made by the method illustrated in Figures 8 and 9 will differ from a sheet of loop material 10a made by the method illustrated in Figure 6 in that the rows of bonding locations 18 and the rows of arcuate portions 20 of the sheet of fibers 16 projecting from the front surface 13 of the thermoplastic backing layer 12 extend longitudinally in what is called the machine direction along the sheet of loop material 10a instead of transversely across the sheet 30 35

- 18 -

of loop material 10a in what is called the cross direction.

The equipment illustrated in Figures 8 and 9 could also be used to form the sheet of loop material 10 by not feeding the sheet of backing material 21 or 22 around 5 the cooling roller 25.

Figure 10 illustrates one corrugating member 65 of a pair of cylindrical heated corrugating members that could be substituted for the corrugating members 26 and 27 or 44 and 45 to form a sheet of loop material 60 using 10 generally the same methods described above with reference to Figures 5, 6 and 8 by providing a sheet of fibers 61, forming the sheet of fibers 61 between the corrugating member 65 and its mating corrugating member (not shown) so that the sheet of fibers 61 has arcuate portions 62 15 projecting in the same direction from spaced generally parallel anchor portions 63, and bonding the spaced generally parallel anchor portions 63 of the sheet of fibers 61 in a backing layer 64 extruded onto the anchor portions 63 with the arcuate portions 62 projecting from a front surface of the backing layer 64. The corrugating member 65 and its mating corrugating member each have an axis and including a plurality of circumferentially spaced 20 generally axially extending discontinuous ridges 66 around and defining its periphery, with the ridges 66 on each corrugating member defining spaces between the ridges 66 25 adapted to receive a portion of the ridges 66 of the other corrugating member in meshing relationship in the manner of a pair of gears with the sheet of fibers 61 between the meshed portions of the ridges 66. The corrugating member 30 65 and its mating corrugating member are mounted in axially parallel relationship to mesh portions of the ridges 66 of the corrugating members in the manner of gear teeth; at least one of the corrugating members is rotated; and the sheet of fibers 61 is fed between the meshed portions of 35 the ridges 66 of the corrugating members to generally conform the sheet of fibers to the periphery of the first corrugating member 65 and form the arcuate portions 62 of the sheet of fibers 61 in the spaces between the ridges 66 of the first corrugating member 65 and the generally

parallel anchor portions 63 of the sheet of fibers 61 along the outer surfaces of the ridges 66. The formed sheet of fibers 61 is retained along the periphery of the first corrugating member 65 after it moves past the meshing portions of the ridges 66. The thermoplastic backing layer 64 is formed and bonded to the anchor portions 63 of the sheet of fibers 61 on the end surfaces of the ridges 66 on the first corrugating member 65 by extruding the thermoplastic backing layer 64 (e.g., polypropylene) in a molten state from a die into a nip between the anchor portions 63 of the sheet of fibers 61 on the periphery of the first corrugating member 65 and a cooling roll after which the sheet of loop material 60 is separated from the first corrugating member 65 and carried partially around the cooling roll to complete cooling and solidification of the thermoplastic backing layer 64.

Like the sheet materials 10 and 10a, the sheet material 60 made using the corrugating member 65 illustrated in Figure 10 comprises the thermoplastic backing layer 64 and might or might not also include a sheet of backing material of the types described above, and includes the sheet of fibers 61 which has its anchor portions 63 bonded in the thermoplastic backing layer 64 at spaced elongate generally parallel bonding locations corresponding to the ridges 66 on the first corrugating member 65 with rows of the arcuate portions 62 of the sheet of fibers 61 projecting from the front surface of the thermoplastic backing layer 64 between the bonding locations, except that the rows of arcuate portions 62 are discontinuous and form a regular pattern along the sheet of loop material 60 instead of being continuous in one direction across the sheet material as in the case of the sheet materials 10 and 10a. If desired, the ridges 66 on the first corrugating member 65 could be arranged so that the anchor and arcuate portions 63 and 62 along the sheet of loop material 60 form words, numbers or symbols to, for example, form a trademark on the sheet of loop material 60.

- 20 -

The following are illustrative examples of sheets of loop materials according to the present invention formed by one embodiment of the method described above.

5 Example Number 1:

The sheet of loop material 10 according to the present invention was made using the method illustrated in and described with respect to Figure 5. Cut 9 denier polypropylene fibers 4.76 centimeters (1.875 inches) long 10 obtained under the commercial designation "9d T-181 1 7/8" from Hercules Inc., Covington, Ga. were formed, using the carding machine 30, into a continuous sheet of fibers 16 having a basis weight of 25 grams per square meter with the majority of the fibers (i.e., 90 percent) oriented in the 15 machine direction. That sheet of fibers 16 was fed into the nip between the corrugating rollers 26 and 27 which were shaped to form along the length of the sheet of fibers 16 (1) about 7.5 loop portions 20 per 2.54 centimeter (1 inch) of sheet length with each loop portion 20 being about 20 0.33 cm high and about 0.33 centimeter long along the length of the sheet of fibers 16, and (2) about 7 anchor portions 17 each about 0.076 centimeter long, and to cause the formed sheet of fibers 16 to have a basis weight of 45 25 grams per square meter measured longitudinally of the sheet of fibers 16. The formed sheet of fibers 16 adhered preferentially to the first corrugating roll 26 due to gravity, the greater surface roughness and the slightly higher temperature of the first corrugating roller 26 (i.e., the first corrugating roller 26 was heated to 260 30 degrees F, whereas the second corrugating roller 27 was heated to 230 degrees F). Polypropylene material commercially designated "Shell 7C50" commercially available from the Seadrift Polypropylene Company, Seadrift, Texas, was extruded through the die 24 at a die temperature of 480 35 degrees F and onto the anchor portions 17 of the formed sheet of fibers 16 just prior to the nip between the first corrugating roller 26 and the cooling roller 25 in an amount appropriate to form the thermoplastic backing layer 12 and cause it to be about 0.0381 centimeter thick with

- 21 -

the anchor portions 17 of the formed sheet of fibers 16 embedded therein, whereupon the formed sheet of fibers 16 and the thermoplastic backing layer 12 moved through the nip between the first corrugating roller 26 and the cooling 5 roller 25 and about 200 degrees around the periphery of the cooling roller 25 which was at a temperature of about 85 degrees F to ensure adequate cooling of the thermoplastic backing layer 12. The thermoplastic backing layer 12 was then printed on its side opposite the sheet of fibers 16 10 and the printing was easily seen through the sheet of fibers 16 along the front surface 13 of the thermoplastic backing layer 12. The resultant sheet of loop material was easily and firmly engaged by the hook material of the type described in U.S. Patent No. 4,894,060 issued January 16, 15 1990, the content whereof is incorporated herein by reference. A 2.54 centimeter (1 inch) wide by 17.78 centimeter (7 inch) long sample of the resultant sheet of loop material was tested in an Instron testing machine in accordance with the ASTM-D882-88 test method (the content 20 whereof is incorporated herein by reference) which showed that at break the fibers had a tensile strength of 9.7 pounds, and had elongated by about 400 percent. This compared to a tensile strength of 6.0 pounds and an elongation of about 4.9 percent for the same fibers 25 attached to a similar backing using sonic welding as described in the application of which this application is a continuation in part.

It is anticipated that fibers of other types than those used, particularly including bi-component fibers such 30 as cut fibers 4.76 centimeters (1.875 inches) long having a polypropylene sheath and a polyester core such as the fibers commercially designated 10d "PP/PET 1 7/8" available from BASF Corporation, Williamsburg, VA., could be substituted for the fibers indicated above and used at 35 about the same basis weight to form a sheet of loop material in which the fibers had more break strength and resiliency than the fibers used in this example.

- 22 -

Example No. 2:

The sheet of loop material 10 according to the present invention was made as described above in Example 5 No. 1 except that the nonwoven sheet of fibers 16 was of cut 10 denier 6.35 centimeter (2.5 inch) long polypropylene fibers pre-bonded in a diamond pattern and having a basis weight of 20 grams per square meter that is available from Hercules Inc., Covington, GA under the commercial 10 designation "10d PP 2.5", and the cooling roll 25 was driven so that the surface speed of the cooling roll 25 was one half the surface speed of the first corrugating member 26. The sheet of loop material 10 produced was similar to that illustrated in Figure 7 in that it had twice as many 15 loop portions 20 per unit length as the sheet of loop material 10 produced by the method described in Example No. 1, those loops being about 0.33 centimeters in height and having a width of about 0.18 centimeter in the machine direction or longitudinally of the sheet of loop material 20 10. It is anticipated that the sheet of loop material 10a according to the present invention could also be made with similar loop portions 20 as those produced in this example by using the method illustrated and described above with respect to Figure 7, and incorporating a polypropylene spun 25 bond nonwoven sheet of backing material 21 into the backing 11a of the sheet of loop material 10a to improve the strength of its backing 11a.

Example No. 3:

The sheet of loop material 10a according to the present invention was made as described above in Example 30 No. 1 except that the method illustrated in and described above with respect to Figure 6 was used and a sheet of backing material 21 in the form of a 0.0381 centimeter 35 (0.0015 inch) thick polypropylene film was incorporated into the backing 11a of the sheet of loop material 10a so that the polypropylene material extruded through the die 24 was positioned between the anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 and the film 21 and surrounded and adhered the

- 23 -

anchor portions 17 of the sheet of fibers 16 to the film 21 so that the film 21 formed the surface of the backing 11a opposite the sheet of fibers 16. The film 21 was pre-printed with characters, and those characters were 5 easily seen through the sheet of fibers 16 on the finished sheet of loop material 10a.

The present invention has now been described with reference to several embodiments thereof. It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that many changes can 10 be made in the embodiments described without departing from the scope of the present invention. Thus the scope of the present invention should not be limited to the structures described in this application, but only by structures described by the language of the claims and the equivalents 15 of those structures.

Claims:

1. A sheet of loop material adapted to be cut into pieces to form loop portions for fasteners of the type comprising releasably engageable hook and loop portions, said sheet of loop material comprising:

5 a backing comprising a thermoplastic backing layer with generally uniform morphology and having front and rear major surfaces: and

10 a sheet of longitudinally oriented fibers having generally non-deformed anchor portions bonded in the thermoplastic backing layer at spaced bonding locations, and arcuate portions projecting from the front surface of the backing between the bonding locations.

15 2. A sheet of loop material according to claim 1 wherein said arcuate portions of said sheet of fibers have a height from the front surface of said backing of less than about 0.64 centimeters (0.250 inch), and said fibers 20 having a basis weight in the range of 5 to 300 grams per square meter measured along said first surface to provide sufficient open area between said fibers along said arcuate portions to afford ready engagement of said fibers along said arcuate portions by the hook portion of a said 25 fastener.

3. A sheet of loop material according to claim 2 wherein the fibers in said arcuate portions project to about the same height above said front surface, and said 30 height is at least one third the distance between said bonding locations.

35 4. A sheet of loop material according to claim 1 adapted to form loop portions of fasteners wherein said arcuate portions of said sheet of fibers have a height from the front surface of said backing of less than about 0.64 centimeters (0.250 inch), and said fibers having a basis weight in the range of 5 to 300 grams per square meter measured along said first surface.

5. A sheet of loop material according to claim 1 wherein said bonding locations are elongate, generally parallel, and continuous in one direction along said front surface of said backing to form continuous rows of said arcuate portions along said front surface of said backing.

6. A sheet of loop material according to claim 1 wherein said bonding locations are elongate, generally parallel, and in a regular pattern of discontinuous lengths 10 to form a pattern of discontinuous rows of said arcuate portions along said front surface of said backing.

7. A sheet of loop material according to claim 1 wherein said bonding locations are elongate and generally 15 parallel, and said fibers are disposed in various directions with respect to said parallel bonding locations with the majority of said fibers extending in directions generally at right angles to said bonding locations.

20 8. A sheet of loop material according to claim 1 wherein said bonding locations are elongate and generally parallel, and essentially all of said fibers extend in directions generally at right angles to said spaced generally parallel bonding locations.

25 9. A sheet of loop material according to claim 1 wherein said fibers have a basis weight in the range of 10 to 75 grams per square meter measured along said front surface of said backing, the fibers in said arcuate portions project to about the same height above said front surface, and said height is in the range of one half to one and one half the distance between said bonding locations.

30 10. A sheet of loop material according to claim 1 wherein said backing consists only of said thermoplastic 35 backing layer.

11. A sheet of loop material according to claim 10 wherein said thermoplastic backing layer has graphics on

said rear surface, and said graphics are visible through said sheet of fibers along said front surface.

12. A sheet of loop material according to claim
5 1 wherein said backing includes said thermoplastic backing
layer and a sheet of backing material having opposite major
surfaces, one of the major surfaces of said sheet of
backing material being adhered by said thermoplastic
backing layer on the side of said thermoplastic backing
10 layer opposite said sheet of fibers.

13. A sheet of loop material according to claim
12 wherein said sheet of backing material is a polymeric
15 film and has graphics on one of said major surfaces, and
said graphics are visible through said sheet of fibers
along said front surface.

14. A sheet of loop material according to claim
12 wherein said sheet of backing material comprises a layer
20 of pressure sensitive adhesive.

15. A sheet of loop material according to claim
1 wherein said thermoplastic backing layer and said fibers
in said sheet of fibers comprise the same thermoplastic
25 material, and the surface of said fibers in said sheet of
fibers are fused to said backing at said bonding locations.

16. A method for forming a sheet of loop
30 material adapted to be cut into pieces to form loop
portions for fasteners of the type having releasably
engageable hook and loop portions, said method comprising:
providing a sheet of fibers;
forming the sheet of fibers to have arcuate
35 portions projecting in the same direction from spaced
anchor portions of the sheet of fibers;
extruding molten thermoplastic material onto the
anchor portions to form at least a portion of a backing
around the spaced anchor portions of the sheet of fibers

with the arcuate portions of the sheet of fibers projecting from a front surface of the backing; and
cooling and solidifying the layer of thermoplastic material.

5

17. A method for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 16 wherein said extruding step forms the entire backing, and said method further includes the step of forming graphics on the surface of the backing 10 opposite the front surface.

18. A method for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 16 wherein the thermoplastic material and the fibers comprise the same thermoplastic 15 material, and said extruding step fuses the thermoplastic material extruded onto the anchor portions of sheet of fibers to the surface of the fibers.

19. A method for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 16 further including the step 20 of positioning a surface of a sheet of backing material intended to be incorporated into the backing closely adjacent the spaced anchor portions, and wherein in said extruding step the molten thermoplastic material is 25 extruded onto both the anchor portions of the fibers and onto the adjacent surface of the sheet of backing material, and said method includes the step of pressing the sheet of backing material and the anchor portions of the fibers into intimate contact with the molten thermoplastic material.

30

20. A method according to claim 19 further including the step of printing the sheet of backing material with graphics along one of its surfaces prior to said positioning step.

35

21. A method for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 16 further including the step of positioning a surface of a sheet of shaping material intended to shape the backing closely adjacent the spaced

anchor portions, and wherein said extruding step extrudes the molten thermoplastic material onto both the anchor portions of the fibers and onto the adjacent surface of the sheet of shaping material, and said method further includes 5 the steps of pressing the sheet of shaping material and the anchor portions of the fibers into intimate contact with the molten thermoplastic material, and striping the sheet of shaping material away after the backing has solidified. 1P

10 22. A method according to claim 16 wherein the sheet of fibers provided in said providing step is nonwoven and has a plurality of the fibers extending in a first direction along the sheet, and said forming step forms the sheet of fibers so that the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers are parallel and elongate in a second direction 15 along the sheet of fibers that is at a right angle to the first direction in which the plurality of the fibers extend along the sheet.

20 23. A method for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 16 wherein said forming step comprises the steps of:

25 providing first and second generally cylindrical corrugating members each having an axis and including a plurality of spaced ridges defining the periphery of the corrugating member, the ridges having outer surfaces and defining spaces between said ridges adapted to receive portions of the ridges of the other corrugating member in meshing relationship with the sheet of fibers therebetween;

30 mounting the corrugating members in axially parallel relationship with portions of the ridges in meshing relationship;

35 rotating at least one of the corrugating members; feeding the sheet of fibers between the meshed portions of the ridges to generally conform the sheet of fibers to the periphery of the first corrugating member and form the arcuate portions of the fibers in the spaces between the ridges of the first corrugating member and the 2

anchor portions of the sheet of fibers along the outer surfaces of the ridges of the first corrugating member; and retaining the formed sheet of fibers along the periphery of the first corrugating member for a predetermined distance after movement past the meshing portions of the ridges; and

5 said extruding step extrudes the molten thermoplastic material onto the anchor portions of the fibers along the periphery of the first corrugating member

10 within the predetermined distance.

24. A method for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 23 further including providing a generally cylindrical cooling roll

15 having an axis; and

mounting the cooling roll in axially parallel relationship with the corrugating members with the periphery of the cooling roll closely spaced from and defining a nip with the periphery of the first corrugating member at the predetermined distance from the meshing portions of the ridges; and

20 said extruding step extrudes the molten thermoplastic material onto the anchor portions of the fibers along the periphery of the first corrugating member

25 adjacent the nip between the cooling roll and the first corrugating member.

25. A method for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 24 wherein said method further

30 includes the step of moving the sheet of loop material for a predetermined distance around the periphery of the cooling roll past the nip with the backing of the sheet of loop material in contact with the cooling roll to cool and solidify the backing.

35

26. A method for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 24 wherein the molten thermoplastic material contacts the peripheral surface of

the cooling roller so that the cooling roller forms a rear surface for the backing opposite the sheet of fibers.

27. A method for forming a sheet of loop
5 material according to claim 26 further including printing
the rear surface of the backing with graphics.

28. A method for forming a sheet of loop
material according to claim 24 wherein said method further
10 includes feeding a sheet of backing material along the
peripheral surface of the cooling roller so that the sheet
of backing material moves through the nip, and the molten
thermoplastic material contacts and adheres to a major
15 surface of the sheet of backing material opposite the
cooling roll to incorporate the sheet of backing material
in the backing.

29. A method for forming a sheet of loop
material according to claim 24 wherein the cooling roller
20 and the first corrugating member are rotated to have about
the same peripheral speed so that the anchor and loop
portions of the sheet of fibers have about the same shape
along the backing of the sheet of loop material as they had
along the periphery of the first corrugating member.

30. A method for forming a sheet of loop
material according to claim 24 wherein the cooling roller
and the first corrugating member are rotated so that the
cooling roller has a slower peripheral speed than the first
30 corrugating member and the anchor portions of the sheet of
fibers are positioned more closely together in the backing
of the sheet of loop material than they were along the
periphery of the first corrugating member.

31. A method according to claim 23 wherein the
ridges of the corrugating members are elongate and parallel
and are oriented at an angle in the range of 0 to 45
degrees with respect to the axes of the corrugating
members, and said feeding step includes the steps of:

providing the fibers in the form of yarns in the range of 50 to 300 denier;

distributing the yarns to provide a sheet of generally uniformly distributed fibers; and

5 feeding the sheet of fibers between the meshed ridges of the corrugating members with all of the fibers extending generally at a right angle to the axes of the corrugating members.

10 32. A method according to claim 23 wherein the ridges of the corrugating members are elongate and parallel to each other and to the axis of the corrugating members so that the corrugating members form anchor portions of the sheet of fibers that extend parallel to the axes of the 15 corrugating members, the sheet of fibers provided in said providing step is nonwoven and has a plurality of the fibers extending in a first direction along the sheet, and in said feeding step the sheet of fibers is fed between the meshed portions of the ridges of the corrugating members 20 with the first direction oriented a right angle to the length of the ridges.

33. A method according to claim 23 wherein the ridges of the corrugating members are elongate, parallel, 25 generally annular, extend circumferentially around and are axially spaced along the corrugating members, and are oriented at a right angle to the axes of the corrugating members so that the corrugating members form anchor portions of the sheet of fibers that extend at a right 30 angle to the axes of the corrugating members, the sheet of fibers provided in said providing step is nonwoven and has a plurality of the fibers extending in a first direction along the sheet, and in said feeding step the sheet of fibers is fed between the meshed portions of the ridges of the corrugating members with the first direction oriented 35 at a right angle to the length of the ridges and parallel to the axes of the corrugating members.

34. A disposable garment including a fastener comprising releasably engageable hook and loop portions, said loop portion comprising:

5 a backing comprising a thermoplastic backing layer with generally uniform morphology and having front and rear major surfaces: and

10 a sheet of longitudinally oriented fibers having generally non-deformed anchor portions bonded in the thermoplastic backing layer at spaced bonding locations, and arcuate portions projecting from the front surface of the backing between the bonding locations.

35. A disposable garment according to claim 34 wherein said arcuate portions have a height from said 15 backing of less than about 0.64 centimeters (0.250 inch), and said fibers having a basis weight in the range of 5 to 200 grams per square meter measured along said first surface to provide sufficient open area between said fibers along said arcuate portions to afford ready engagement of 20 said fibers along said arcuate portions by the hook portion of said fastener.

36. A disposable diaper including a fastener comprising releasably engageable hook and loop portions, 25 said loop portion comprising:

a backing comprising a thermoplastic backing layer with generally uniform morphology and having front and rear major surfaces: and

30 a sheet of longitudinally oriented fibers having generally non-deformed anchor portions bonded in the thermoplastic backing layer at spaced bonding locations, and arcuate portions projecting from the front surface of the backing between the bonding locations.

35 37. A disposable diaper according to claim 36 wherein said arcuate portions have a height from said backing of less than about 0.64 centimeters (0.250 inch), and said fibers having a basis weight in the range of 5 to 200 grams per square meter measured along said first

surface to provide sufficient open area between said fibers along said arcuate portions to afford ready engagement of said fibers along said arcuate portions by the hook portion of said fastener.

5

38. A disposable diaper according to claim 36 wherein said diaper includes an outer polymeric layer and said rear surface of said backing is adhered to said outer polymeric layer.

10

39. Equipment for forming a sheet of loop material from a sheet of fibers and thermoplastic material, said equipment comprising:

first and second generally cylindrical
15 corrugating members each having an axis and including a plurality of spaced ridges defining the periphery of the corrugating member, the ridges having outer surfaces and defining spaces between said ridges adapted to receive portions of the ridges of the other corrugating member in
20 meshing relationship with the sheet of fibers therebetween;

means for mounting the corrugating members in axially parallel relationship with portions of the ridges in meshing relationship;

means for rotating at least one of the
25 corrugating members so that when the sheet of fibers is fed between the meshed portions of the ridges the sheet of fibers will be generally conformed to the periphery of the first corrugating member to form the arcuate portions of the sheet of fibers in the spaces between the ridges of the
30 first corrugating member and to form anchor portions of the sheet of fibers along the outer surfaces of the ridges of the first corrugating member;

means for retaining the formed sheet of fibers along the periphery of the first corrugating member for a predetermined distance after movement past the meshing
35 portions of the ridges;

means for extruding the molten thermoplastic material as a molten sheet and positioning the molten sheet on the anchor portions of the fibers along the periphery of

the first corrugating member within the predetermined distance.

40. Equipment for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 39 further including a generally cylindrical cooling roll having an axis;

means for rotatably mounting the cooling roll in axially parallel relationship with the corrugating members with the periphery of the cooling roll closely spaced from and defining a nip with the periphery of the first corrugating member at the predetermined distance from the meshing portions of the ridges; and

means for moving the sheet of loop material for a predetermined distance around the periphery of the cooling roll past the nip with the backing of the sheet of loop material formed by the thermoplastic material in contact with the cooling roll to cool and solidify the backing.

41. Equipment for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 39 further including a generally cylindrical cooling roll having an axis;

means for rotatably mounting the cooling roll in axially parallel relationship with the corrugating members with the periphery of the cooling roll closely spaced from and defining a nip with the periphery of the first corrugating member at the predetermined distance from the meshing portions of the ridges;

means for guiding a layer of backing material along the surface of the cooling roll and into the nip with the periphery of the first corrugating member so that the thermoplastic material adheres the anchor portions of the sheet of fibers to the layer of backing material at the nip; and

means for moving the sheet of loop material for a predetermined distance around the periphery of the cooling roll past the nip with the layer of backing material in contact with the cooling roll to cool and solidify the backing.

42. Equipment for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 39 further including means for forming the sheet of fibers from loose fibers as a non woven sheet of randomly oriented fibers 5 with no internal bonding except for the friction between the fibers; and

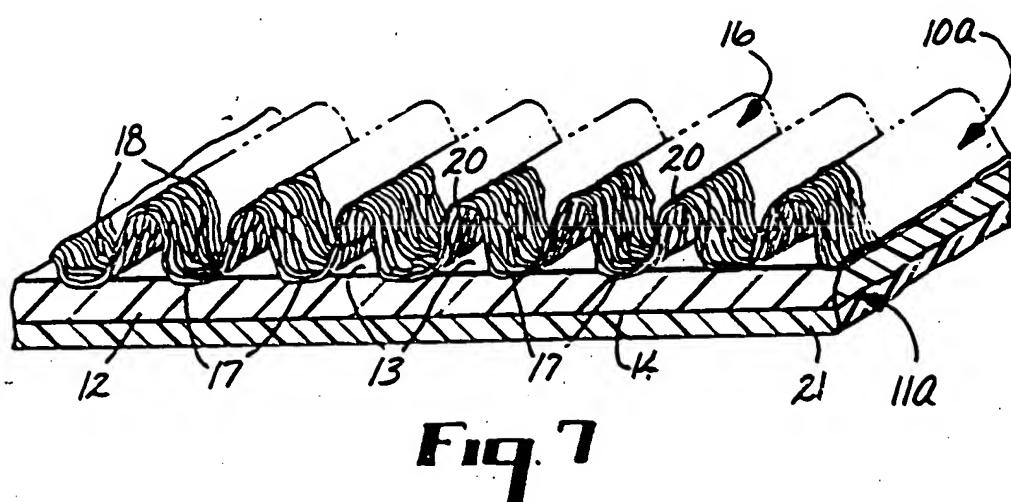
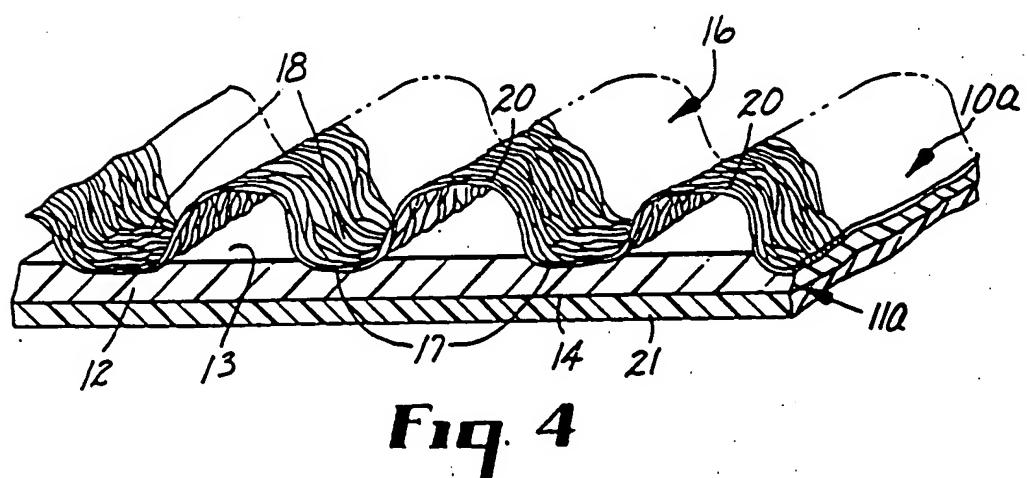
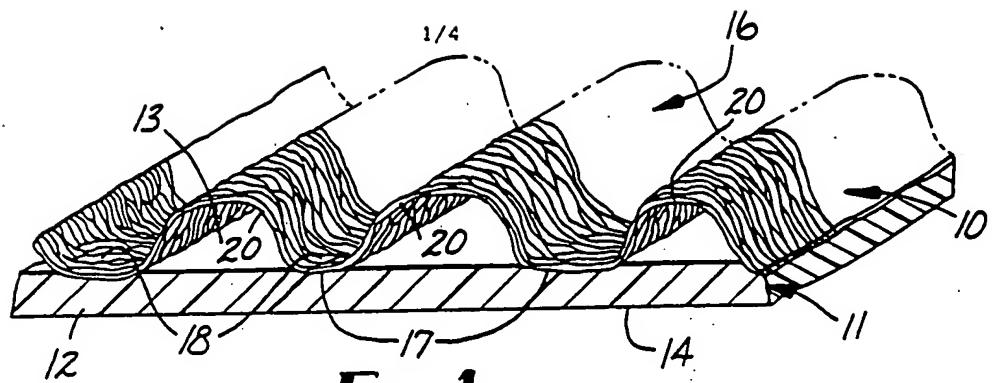
wherein said second corrugating member has a smooth surface finish, and said second corrugating member has a surface finish that is very rough compared to the 10 surface finish of said second corrugating member so that said sheet of fibers preferentially adheres along the surface of said first corrugating member after movement of the sheet of fibers between the first and second corrugating members.

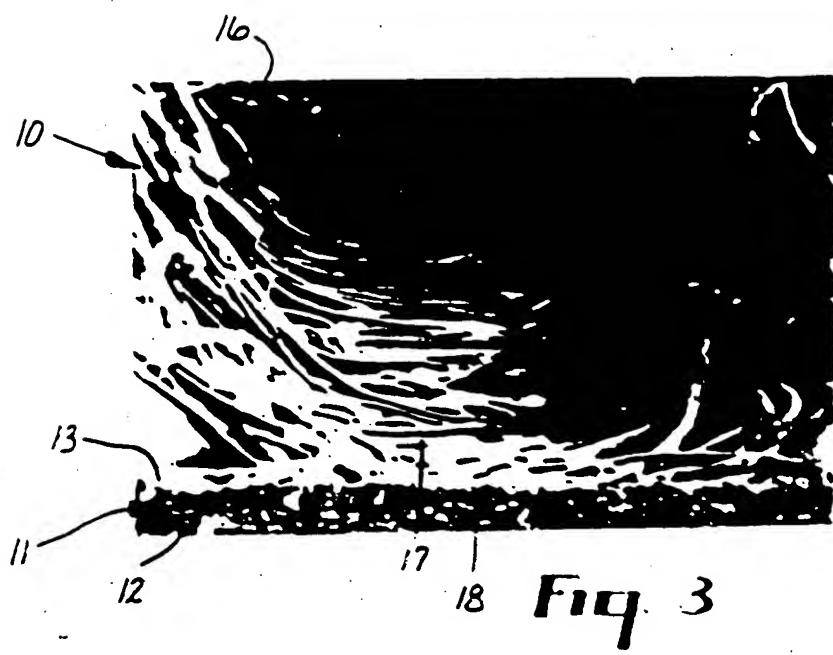
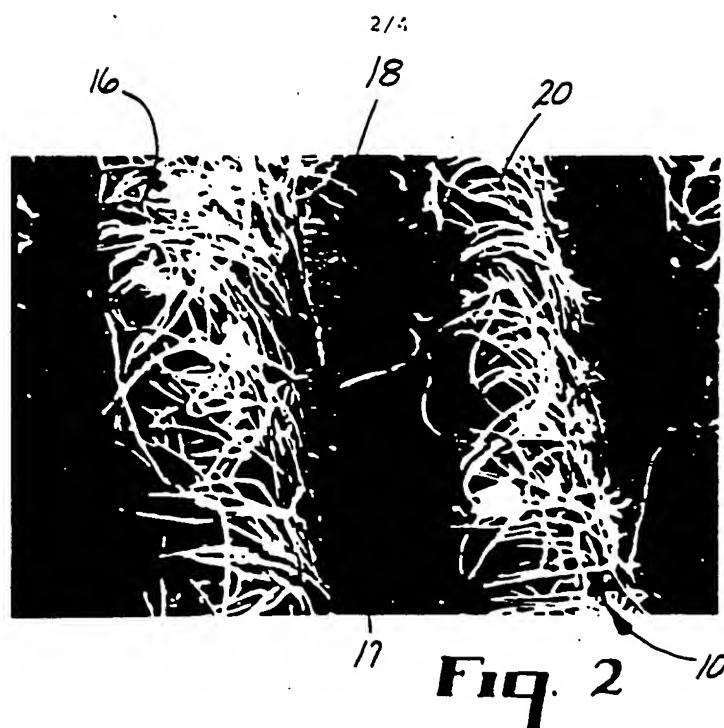
15 43. Equipment for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 40 further including means for rotating the cooling roller and the first corrugating member to have about the same peripheral speed so that the anchor and loop portions of the sheet of fibers have about 20 the same shape along the backing of the sheet of loop material as they had along the periphery of the first corrugating member.

25 44. Equipment for forming a sheet of loop material according to claim 40 further including means for rotating the cooling roller and the first corrugating member so that the cooling roller has a slower peripheral speed than the first corrugating member so that the anchor 30 portions of the sheet of fibers are positioned more closely together in the backing of the sheet of loop material than they were along the periphery of the first corrugating member.

35 45. Equipment according to claim 39 wherein the ridges of the corrugating members are elongate and parallel and are oriented at an angle in the range of 0 to 45 degrees with respect to the axes of the corrugating members.

46. Equipment according to claim 39 wherein the ridges of the corrugating members are elongate, parallel, generally annular, extend circumferentially around and are axially spaced along the corrugating members, and are 5 oriented at a right angle to the axes of the corrugating members so that the corrugating members form anchor portions of the sheet of fibers that extend at a right angle to the axes of the corrugating members.





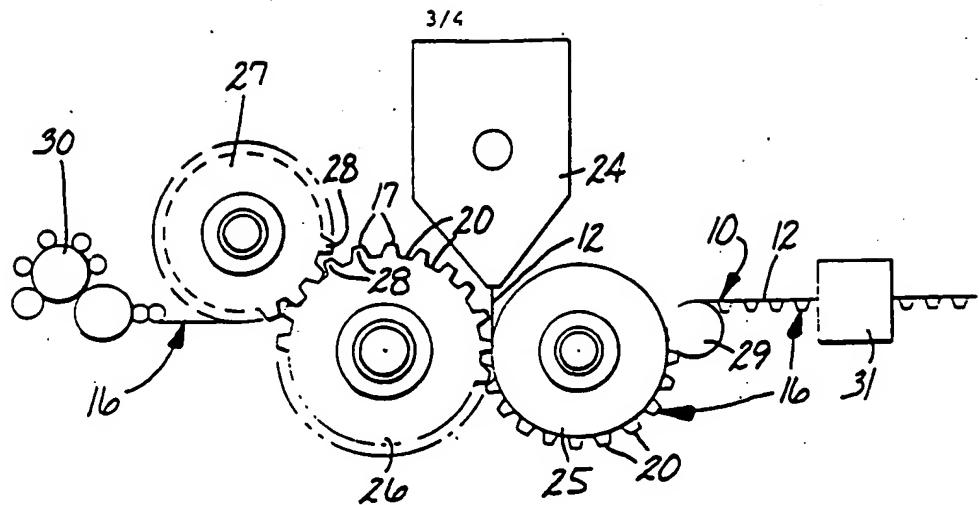


Fig. 5

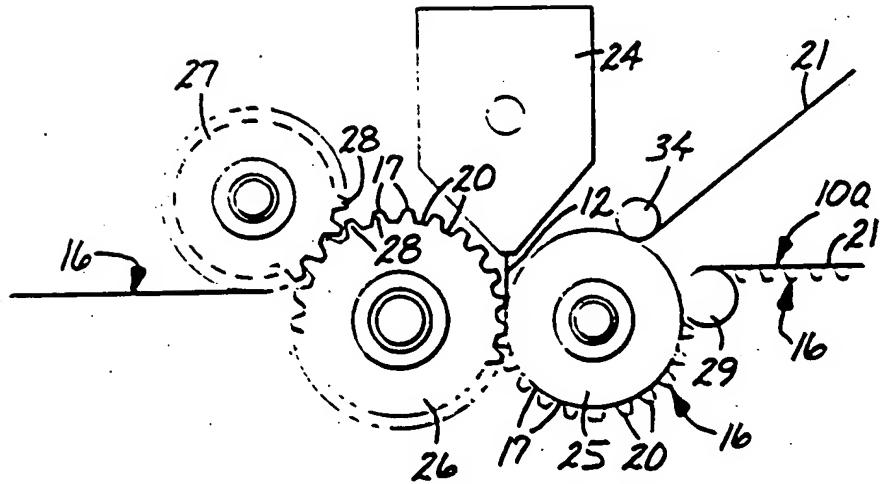


Fig. 6

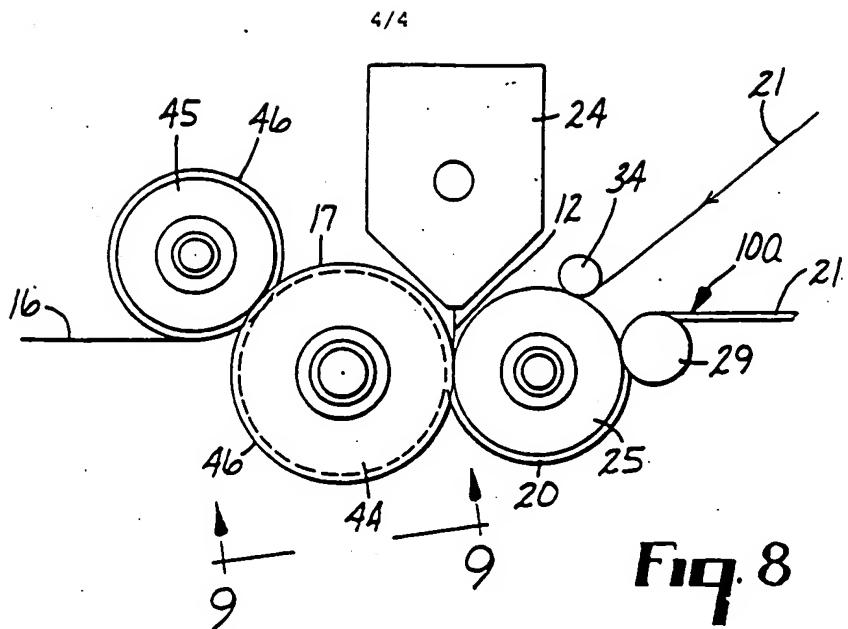


Fig. 8

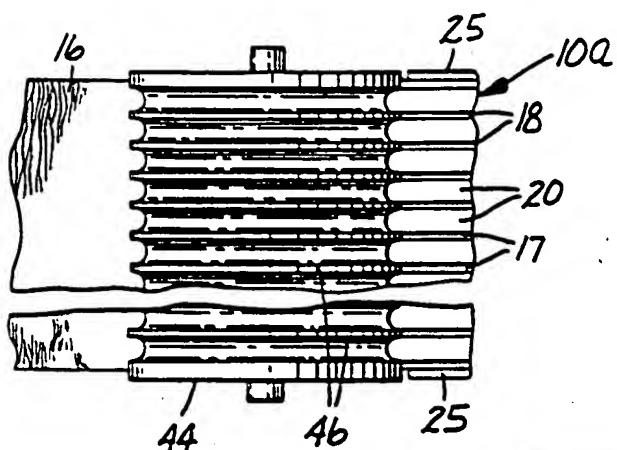


Fig. 9

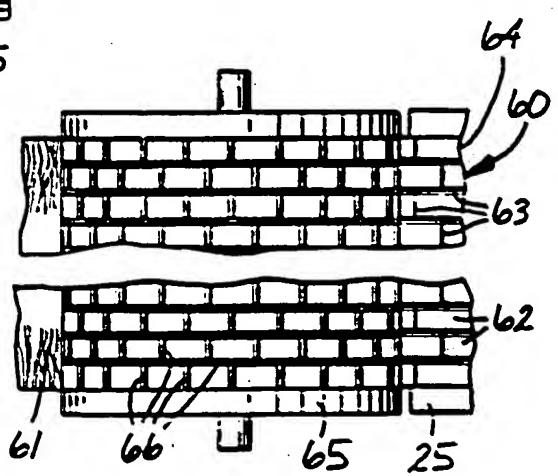


Fig. 10

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/US 91/05013

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (If several classification symbols apply, indicate all)⁶

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC

Int.C1. 5 A44B18/00

II. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum Documentation Searched⁷

| Classification System | Classification Symbols |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Int.C1. 5 | A44B |
| Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation to the Extent that such Documents are Included in the Fields Searched ⁸ | |

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT⁹

| Category ¹⁰ | Citation of Document ¹¹ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹² | Relevant to Claim No. ¹³ |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
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| X | EP,A,0 341 993 (MINNESOTA MINING AND MFG CY) 15 November 1989 | 1-15 16-35, 39-46 |
| Y | see the whole document | |
| X | EP,A,0 258 015 (MINNESOTA MINING AND MFG CY) 2 March 1988 | 1-10 16-35, 39-46 |
| Y | see the whole document | |
| A | EP,A,0 330 415 (MINNESOTA MINING AND MFG CY) 30 August 1989 see the whole document | 1-10, 16-46 |
| | | -/- |

¹⁰ Special categories of cited documents:

- ¹¹ A document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
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- ¹⁵ document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

- ¹⁶ later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- ¹⁷ document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step
- ¹⁸ document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such documents being known to a person skilled in the art
- ¹⁹ document member of the same patent family

IV. CERTIFICATION

Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search

06 NOVEMBER 1991

Date of Mailing of the International Search Report

26. 11. 91

International Searching Authority

EUROPEAN PATENT OFFICE

Signature of Authorized Officer

M. VANOL

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT (CONTINUED FROM THE SECOND SHEET)

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| A | US,A,3 577 607 (Y. IKOMA) 4 May 1971 see the whole document --- | 1-10 |
| A | CH,A,495 122 (VELCRO SA) 31 August 1970 see column 5, line 9 - line 37 --- | 1,16 |
| A | GB,A,2 164 900 (YOSHIDA KOGYO KK) 3 April 1986 see page 1, line 7 - page 3, line 118; figures --- | 11-14 |

ANNEX TO THE INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
ON INTERNATIONAL PATENT APPLICATION NO. US 9105013
SA 49880

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on 06/11/91. The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

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| | | US-A- | 4910062 | 20-03-90 |
| US-A-3577607 | 04-05-71 | None | | |
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